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News Release



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Sherrie Russell Meline Selected as Winner of 2005 Federal Duck Stamp Contest

For the second time in history, a woman has won the Federal Duck Stamp contest. Wildlife artist Sherrie Russell Meline, from Mt. Shasta, California, today won the Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest in Memphis, Tennessee.

“Sherrie Russell Meline is a very talented and exceptional artist” said Steve Thompson, Manager of the California and Nevada Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “Her painting of Ross’ geese highlights the outstanding waterfowl that depend on the Klamath and California’s central valley National Wildlife Refuges”

Russell Meline’s painting of Ross’ geese bested 232 other entries and will grace the 2006-2007 Federal Duck Stamp, which goes on sale July 1, 2006. The sale of Federal Duck Stamps raises approximately \$25 million each year to fund waterfowl habitat acquisition for the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Federal Duck Stamp Contest is sponsored each year by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

All waterfowl hunters age 16 and older are required to purchase and carry Duck Stamps. Ninety-eight percent of the proceeds from the \$15 Duck Stamp go into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, which purchases wetlands for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Russell Meline has entered the Federal Duck Stamp competition 15 times over the last 25 years. Russell Meline’s winning artwork is a close-up of a Ross’ goose in reeds with several flying birds in the background. She completed the work over a four month period. Russell Meline was born and raised in Madison, Wisconsin, and graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in fine arts. She began her art career doing three-dimensional art, but was inspired to paint waterfowl after she began collecting waterfowl decoys.

Russell Meline and her husband own a gallery, Wingbeat, in Mt. Shasta. Her artwork has been used for more than 30 state waterfowl stamps, including Arizona, Texas, Nevada, and Iowa. Over the next four years, she will be working on a commission to paint waterfowl stamps for the 12 provinces of Canada. Her art can be seen at <http://www.wingbeat.com>.

The Federal Duck Stamp Contest is the nation's longest running federally-sponsored art competition. No cash prize is awarded, but winning can boost the professional reputation of even a previously unknown wildlife artist. Winning artists stand to make hundreds of thousands of dollars from the sale of limited editions of prints of their Duck Stamp designs.

There are more than 545 National Wildlife Refuges spread across all 50 states and U.S. territories. A valid Duck Stamp can be used for free admission to any refuge open to the public. Refuges offer unparalleled recreation opportunities, including hunting, fishing, birdwatching and photography. Duck Stamp dollars have been used to acquire land at hundreds of refuges in nearly every state in the nation.

Duck Stamps bearing this year's winning design will go on sale at post offices, national wildlife refuges, some national retail chain stores, and various sporting-goods stores nationwide July 1, 2006. The 2006-2007 Duck Stamp will be available at select locations in both a self-adhesive format and the traditional gummed format.

The five judges for the competition were chosen by the Secretary of the Interior for their dedication to conservation and their professional expertise. They are:

Ward Burton, winner of the 2002 Daytona 500 and founder of the Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation;
Bill Crawford, 2005 Budweiser Conservationist of the Year;
Steve Runnels, President and CEO of the American Birding Association;
Ruby J. Bridgeforth, Postmaster/Metro manager in Memphis;
Jane Lavino, Curator of Education for the National Wildlife Art Museum.

Photos of the top three paintings are available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/duckstamps>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.